YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL

ON

FIRST NATIONS CHILD WELFARE

ANNUAL REPORT

1997/98

YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
FIRST NATIONS CHILD WELFARE
BOX 5492
WHITEHORSE, YUKON
Y1A 5H4

Pat Martin,
Chair
(403) 668-4784

Agnes Johnson,
Vice-Chair
(403) 841-5141

Deana Lemke,
Administrative
Assistant
(403) 667-4394
FAX: 393-3904

June 15, 1998

Honorable Dave Sloan
Minister of Health and social Services
Government of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Honorable Mr. Sloan:

On behalf of the Yukon Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare, I am pleased to present you with our 1997/98 Annual Report.

This report covers highlights of council activities during the period between April 1, 1997 and March 31, 1998.

Sincerely,

Pat Martin
Chair

/dml

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Yukon Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This past year has proved to be a full and productive year for the members of the Advisory Committee. The long awaited conference for Yukon communities on child welfare issues was a success. If you are interested in obtaining a summary report from the First Nation Child Welfare Conference, please contact us.

Again I would like to bring attention to the past and present members who are presently serving and have served on the Council during this fiscal year. Their dedication for the well-being and health of our children are what is foremost on the agenda at our meetings. This is reflected throughout the year when consensus is needed to bring forth recommendations for improving program delivery for First Nation children.

On behalf of the Advisory Council, I would like to extend an invitation to individuals or organizations who are interested in presenting their concerns or issues with regard to First Nation child welfare matters. Please contact us at Box 5492, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5H4, or contact our Secretariat Officer, Deana Lemke, at 667-7500 (phone) or 393-3904 (fax).

Pat Martin
Chair

MEMBERSHIP

Pat Martin, Chair

Agnes Johnson, Vice-Chair

Kathy Magun

Percy Henry

Dorothy John

Brenda Sam

* John Edzerza

* member term of appointment ended during this reporting period.

FORMATION AND MANDATE

The formation of the Council began in 1987 when the Minister of the day identified a need for greater involvement of First Nation people in child welfare services. The Council was approved during the summer of 1988 under regulations pursuant to the Children's Act, Section 177(1)d. The first meeting of the Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare took place in September 1988.

The Council's identified fundamental principle is for the well being of the child. Section 3 of the Regulations under the Mandate states:

(1) The Advisory Council shall advise the Executive Council member on matters concerning the welfare of Indian children in the Yukon which the Executive Council Member refers to the Council for its advice.

(2) The Advisory Council may advise the Executive Council Member on those matters concerning the welfare of Indian children in the Yukon which the Advisory Council thinks it is appropriate to bring to the Executive Member's attention.

(3) The Advisory Council may:

- *(a) consider submissions and suggestions from individuals and groups concerning the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(b) recommend and undertake research on matters concerning the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(c) recommend policies and legislation to enhance the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(d) recommend and participate in the development of services concerning the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(e) publish reports and information on matters concerning the welfare of Indian children.*

MEETINGS

The Council is required to hold meetings at least four times per year. During the 1997/98 fiscal year, the Council was able to hold five two-day regular meetings. Three meetings were held in Whitehorse on the following dates:

October 16 and 17, 1997
December 11 and12, 1997
April 30 - May 2, 1998 (Child Welfare Conference)
February 26 and 27, 1998

In addition to the Council members, the following guests attended:

Health and Social Services:

Honorable Dave Sloan: Minister of Health and Social Services
Anne Sheffield: Director of Family and Children's Services
Charles Pugh: Residential Services Coordinator
Carol Cunningham: Youth Worker, Youth Services
Nancy Duesner: Treatment Coordinator, Child Abuse Treatment Centre
Cathy Deacon: Youth Sex Offender Treatment Program
Pam Adamson: Family Group Conferencing Program

Also in attendance:

Community Services:

Janet Whitfield: Children's Receiving Home
Sandra Gibbs: Gibbs Group Homes
Jeddie Russell: "No Name" House

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MEETINGS

Yukon First Nations Child Welfare Conference

This three day conference addressed a variety of issues including: Traditional First Nation Laws; First Nation Foster Care Parenting; Child Welfare Protocol Agreements; Juvenile Crime Prevention; Early Intervention in Child Welfare; the Children's Act and First Nation Children. There were presentations by First Nations, discussion groups, Elders and participants on child welfare issues.

Concerns were expressed, comments and recommendations put forth and most participants felt that all benefited from the conference. In the words of one of the participants, "This conference was very beneficial; it is good that all the First Nations peole are striving forward for a common goal which is our children, our future leaders".

Youth Sex Offender Treatment Program

Cathy Deacon once again adressed the Advisory Council regarding the program. The program can be modified for youth at risk in the areas of: adolescents with alcohol problems; physical, sexual, emotional abuse victims; and exposure to pornography. Despite the success of the program, there is a continuing struggle to keep it going. The Department of Health and Social Services will be considering the possibility of creating an additional position to work with this program in the future.

Residential Home Review:

The Minister related that an independent review of group homes will be conducted including: the Gibbs Group Homes, the Children's Receiving Home and Northern Network of Services. Those conducting the review will have had no previous dealings with Family and Children's Services and the Department will support the review board with a Yukon Advisory Board.

Youth Recreational Programs:

The Advisory Council was pleased to learn of the success with recreational programming for youths of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. It was reported that Kwanlin Dun noticed an 80% reduction in property crime during the two months the program was in place. The Department

agreed to continue this program to assist Kwanlin Dun to continue the work started during the summer program, help them to link in health and education programs, and establish protocol agreements for future administration of child welfare services. An additional positive result of the program was the secondment of Tim Brady to Kwanlin Dun. The success here is a strong indicator of what may be achieved with future secondments to First Nations.

Ross River and Upper Liard noticed similar successes with summer recreational programs. It was recommended recreational programs be expanded to target older teens.

The Minister noted that $200,000 has been added to the budget of the Department of Education to go towards youth programs in education, youth projects, youth employment and youth recreation.

Child Care Program

The Council remains concerned about tthe length of time it is taking for First Nation appointments to be made on the Daycare Board.

The Minister related that during his tour of communities, the concern most often expressed with regard to child welfare, was the need for child care space, child care subsidies and direct operating grants.

An additional $800,000 was put into child care last year due to rising costs. Some recommendations made by the Child Care Board were to target the lower income people as recipients for additional child care funding.

Youth Achievement Centre

Council members toured the Youth Achievement Centre. The age range of youth involved in programs is 12-18 years. The centre has 5 staff members. There is a psychologist who assesses the participants and informs staff what areas the youth need help in.

Youth Achievement Centre staff have put much effort into improving a strucutured program, assisting over 100 teens last year who were either suspended from school, refused to attend, or were in open custody. The program includes carpentry, food/nutrition, remedial education, life skills, physical exercise, community service, work experience, dealing with anger emotions, young men's sports and sexuality, and young women of grit.

Council discussed the need for the existence of a solid network between social workers, homes, psychologists and others involved in working with individual youth. It is important that all involved are aware of the specific background and history of each youth in order to promote understanding, concern and respect and to be able to assist in the most effective way.

Young Offenders Facility

Council members toured the Young Offender Facility and were provided with an an outline of services available to youths in the facility including: schooling (a new teacher was hired in 1997), a cultural component, alcohol and drug program, Shield program, A.A., anger and agression management, and the hatchery and salmon enhancement project. There was concern about the strucutre of the programming as services had to be organized around the school day and there was not enough time to offer every program every day. A schedule from the facility was requestsed by the Council to give a clearer picture of program delivery.

Council would like to see elders included in the programming to provide assistance in the area of cultural resources for the programs at the Young Offenders Facility.

It was reported that in 1997, 68% of young offenders were First Nation. The majority were male. Staff at the facility consist of 17 full time and 17 auxiliary staff members, four are First Nation. Council felt that cross-cultural awareness training for staff should be incorporated at the Young Offenders Facility.

Family and Children's Services

Anne Sheffield, Director of Family and Children's Services, reported to the Council that she has been meeting with communities to discuss child welfare program services transfers. The First Nations have the right to legislate their own laws in this area and her role is to describe YTG's services, prgrams and budgets. First Nations will take the lead and explain how they want to proceed and the Government will assist them in their planning.

Diversion Program

Nina Bolton was invited to update the Council on activities of the Diversion Program at the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. The program's main focus is working with young people and high risk youths. The centre offers an employment training program which provides funding for training, helps with resume writing and job hunting.

Another program provided by Skookum Jim's is a recreation program run by Nina Clugie, who helps head up the North American Indigenous Games. She works in association with the Arctic Winter Games and runs the Tranditional Games and Dene Sports. The Traditional Games have become part of some of the school's recreation cirriculum. This summer training for the Rediscovery Leadership Program will be hosted in Yukon.

Other programs offered are the prenatal nutrition, traditional parenting and the baby club which is an extension of the Traditional Parenting program. Work is ongoing to offer some of these programs at the Young Offenders Facility.

Nina Bolton extends her counselling services to the youth at the Young Offenders Facility and is seeking additional funding from the Department of Health and Social Services.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Health and Social Services Council

At the request of the Minister, the Chair of the Advisory Council is also a member of the Health and Social Services Council. The Minister felt that this would contribute towards better communication and productivity of the two Councils, specifically in areas of joint interests.

First Nation Family Reunification Workshop

The Council investigated the feasibility of presenting a First Nation Family Reunification Workshop in Whitehorse. The workshop is proposed to run for two days: a presentation on the first day for a general audience and the second day for First Nation organizations to discuss efforts to establish or support a Yukon program similar to the Manitoba First Nation Repatriation Program and the United Native Nations (Vancouver).

Oregon Child Welfare Conference

Council sought approval and funding from the Department for two members to attend the Oregon Conference in Portland, Oregon from April 20 to 22, 1998.

GOALS FOR 1998/99

First Nation Family Reunification Workshop

The Council is seeking approval from the Department of Health and Social Services to redirect some of its financial surplus to fund a First Nation Family Reunification Workshop in Whitehorse.

FAS / FAE

The Council will endeavor to promote FAS / FAE awareness and education. More discussion will be entered into around how this may be done effectively.

Cultural Camps

The Council would like to have more involvement in monitoring the youth cultural camps prgramming, including the cultural components.

Young Offenders Facility

The Council will continue to express an interest in participating in monitoring the activites at the Young Offenders Facility.

Newsletter

In order to promote awareness of the Council's function and it's activities, plans are being made to publish a periodic newsletter that will be distributed to First Nations community organizations. To ensure you are on our mailing list to receive a copy of this newsletter, please contact us at the address on Page 14.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998

REVENUE:

1996/97 Surplus (Conference funds)	$ 22,758.54	
Contribution Agreement (April)	10,300.00	
Contribution Agreement (June)	30,900.00	
Contribution (Conference)	2,189.17	
Conference Registration Fees	1,580.00	
TOTAL REVENUE		$ 67,727.71

EXPENSES:

YFNCW Conference	$ 27,378.50	
Honoraria	10,000.00	
Travel	2,913.12	
Accommodation	1,737.74	
Refreshments/Lunch	399.23	
Meals and Incidentals	1,665.75	
Administrative Support	9,480.00	
Telephone	126.34	
Child Care	364.00	
Office and Other Expenses	640.55	
Workshops	2,500.85	
FN Famiiy Reunification Workshop	2,327.95	
TOTAL EXPENSES$	59,534.03	

BALANCE, March 31, 1998 $ 8,193.68